

Sybil Ludington's Ride

BY BERTON BRALEY

SYBIL LUDINGTON — the feminine Paul Revere — is a little-known heroine of the American Revolution. Her ride is historical fact. The old Ludington manor house still stands near Carmel, New York, and is identified by a marker that has been erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of a lovely feminine Paul Revere

Who rode an equally famous ride
Through a different part of the countryside.

Where Sybil Ludington's name recalls
A ride as daring as that of Paul's.

In April, Seventeen Seventy-Seven,
A smoky glow in the eastern heaven

(A fiery herald of war and slaughter)
Came to the eyes of the Colonel's daughter.

"Danbury's burning," she cried aloud.
The Colonel answered, "'Tis but a cloud.

A cloud reflecting the campfires' red,
So hush you, Sybil, and go to bed."

"I hear the sound of the cannon drumming . . ."
"'Tis only the wind in the treetops humming!"

So go to bed, as a young lass ought,
And give the matter no further thought."

Young Sybil sighed as she turned to go,
"Still, Danbury's burning — that I know."

Sound of a horseman riding hard . . .
Clatter of hoofs in the manoryard . . .

Feet on the steps and a knock resounding
As a fist struck wood with a mighty pounding.

The door's flung open, a voice is heard,
"Danbury's burning — I rode with word;

Fully half of the town is gone
And the British — the British are coming on.

Send a messenger, get your men!"
His message finished, the horseman then

Staggered wearily to a chair
And fell exhausted in slumber there.

The Colonel muttered, "And who, my friend,
Who is the messenger I can send?"

Your strength is spent and you cannot ride
And, then, you know not the countryside:

I cannot go, for my duty's clear;
When my men come in they must find me here:

There's devil a man on the place tonight
To warn my troopers to come — and fight.

"Then, who is my messenger to be?"
Said Sybil Ludington, "You have me."

"You!" said the Colonel, and grimly smiled.
"You! My daughter, you're just a child!"

"'Child!' " cried Sybil. "Why, I'm sixteen!
My mind's alert and my senses keen,

I know where the trails and the roadways are
And I can gallop as fast and far

As any masculine rider can.
You want a messenger? I'm your man!"

The Colonel's heart was aglow with pride.
"Spoke like a soldier! Ride, girl, ride —

Ride like the devil, ride like sin.
Summon my slumbering troopers in.

I know when duty is to be done
That I can depend on a Ludington!"

So over the trails to the towns and farms
Sybil delivered the call to arms.

Riding swiftly without a stop
Except to rap with a riding crop

On the soldiers' doors, with a sharp tattoo
And a high-pitched feminine halloo.

"Up! up! there, soldier! You're needed, come!
The British are marching!" — and then the drum

Of her horse's feet as she rode apace
To bring more men to the meeting place.

Sybil grew weary and faint and drowsing,
Her limbs were aching, but still she rode
Until she finished her task of rousing
Each sleeping soldier from his abode,

Showing her father, by work well done,
That he could depend on a Ludington.

Dawn in the skies with its tints of pearl
And the lass who rode in a soldier's stead
Turned home, only a tired girl
Thinking of breakfast and then of bed

With never a dream that her ride would be
A glorious legend of history;

Nor that posterity's hand would mark
Each trail she rode through the inky dark.

Each path to figure in song and story
As a splendid, glamorous path of glory —

To prove, as long as the ages run,
That "you can depend on a Ludington."

Such is the legend of Sybil's ride
To summon the men from the countryside.

A true tale, making her title clear
As a lovely feminine Paul Revere!

Sidelines

STARTING this Sunday, "Be Kind to Animals Week" will be celebrated in almost every part of the nation. Schools, churches, civic organizations and publications are promoting this humane idea. No other nation on earth has ever thought of setting apart a time to remember our responsibilities to the dumb creatures — the friends and servants of mankind.

★ ★

IN THIS issue, Chandler Whipple presents as fiction the beautiful and moving story of Abraham Lincoln's last evening in the White House on April 14 — just 75 years ago.

The story reminds us of an unsolved mystery. Have you noticed the old painted clocks that hang over watchmakers' shops? In most cases, you'll find the painted hands pointing to exactly the same hour — 18 minutes past 8. Why? Does anyone know the answer? There's a tradition among watchmakers that the painted hands commemorate the exact moment of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. BUT — Booth's fatal shot was fired at 10:30 P.M. on April 14, 1865, and Lincoln died between 7:20 and 7:25 the next morning. So the mystery still remains: "What happened at 8:18?" It's a haunting question. When we get the right answer, we'll print it in this column.

★ ★

IN A recent issue of *Visual Digest*, Henry Schmeil makes the statement that the world's greatest men had light-colored eyes — blue, blue-gray, or gray. Then he cites a long list of people who prove his point. Among them: Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Shakespeare, Newton, Edison, Lincoln, Grant and Lee.

★ ★

BITAIN started the war with a feverish building of gas-proof bomb shelters, never guessing that the most effective (and at this writing the only) air-raid and gas attack on London would be carried out by a lone Nazi armed only with a microphone, a beautiful Oxford accent and a genius for getting across German propaganda sugar-coated with entertainment. This announcer, who broadcasts to England from Zeesen every night at 9:15 (Greenwich time), has been nicknamed by the British "Lord Haw-Haw." He was the inspiration for a dramatic and moving story in this issue of our magazine called "The News in English," by the popular Graham Greene, author of "Orient Express" and other breath-taking stories.

★ ★

SEVERAL years ago, Yale University awarded an honorary degree to Walt Disney because "he labored and brought forth a mouse." Now he has brought forth another creature that has taken America by storm — Jiminy Cricket, official conscience to Pinocchio. There's not much doubt that Jiminy is moviedom's "Man of the Year" for 1940. We are happy to tell you that next week Jiminy Cricket "himself" will appear "in person" in our pages. He will then make an important announcement exclusively to THIS WEEK readers. M.



SYBIL LUDINGTON'S RIDE.....	by BERTON BRALEY	2
SHOULD MEN OF 50 FIGHT OUR WARS?.....	by COL. WILLIAM J. DONOVAN	4
THE NEWS IN ENGLISH.....	by GRAHAM GREENE	5
Illustrated by James Schucker		
BRAINS WANTED!.....	by LYLE M. SPENCER	6
THE RIGHT CROWD.....	by JOSEPHINE BENTHAM	7
Illustrated by Earl Cordrey		
IT'S IN THE CARDS — OR IS IT?.....	by RAY BLADES	8
HOW TO HAVE A WELL-SHAPED HEAD.....	by SYLVIA BLYTHE	10
COMBING THE HAIR OF THE JUNGLE.....	by PEGGY VON DER GOLTZ	11
AT EIGHT O'CLOCK IN APRIL.....	by CHANDLER WHIPPLE	12
Illustrated by Arthur Sarnoff		

RHYMES ABOUT TOWN.....	by MARGARET FISHBACK	13
GOOD RECIPES FOR BUSY PEOPLE.....	by GRACE TURNER	14
QUEER DUCKS, AREN'T WE?.....	by KATHLEEN MASTERSON	17
BIRD SONG IN BATTLE.....	by HOMER CROY	17
SHOOTING THEM THROUGH BARS.....	by FULTON WILLIAMS	19
WALLY'S WAGON.....	by WALLY BOREN	21

Cover by F. Sands Brunner

The names and descriptions of all characters that appear in short stories, serials and semi-fiction articles in THIS WEEK MAGAZINE are wholly fictitious. Any use of a name which happens to be the same as that of any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.